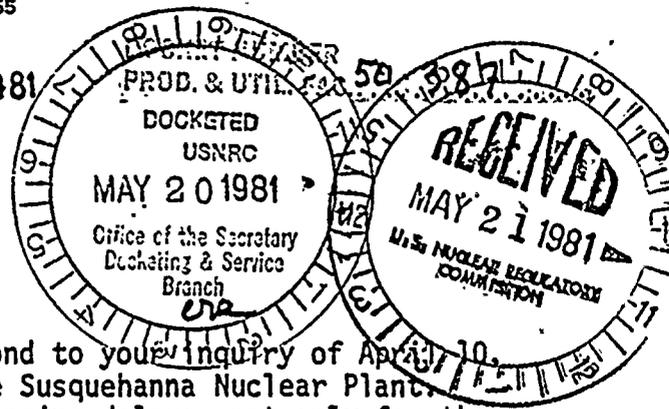




UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

MAY 5 1981



50-987

The Honorable Manuel Lujan  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Lujan:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond to your inquiry of April 10, 1981 concerning the licensing schedule for the Susquehanna Nuclear Plant. The Commission shares your concerns about licensing delays, not only for the Susquehanna Plant, but for all plants that are being affected by delays in the licensing process. During the past month, the Commission and its staff have spent considerable time in reviewing the licensing schedules for these plants and have undertaken various approaches to shorten them wherever possible.

For those plants nearest completion, the primary problem is the projected length of the hearing process and subsequent Commission review. At present, an operating license is not issued until the Appeals Board and the Commission review the Licensing Board decision. This review process takes about three months. The Commission has published proposed changes to its rules which will shorten this time by two or three months. This savings would be applicable to all impacted plants.

The Commission also believes it can compress the licensing schedule from an average of 18 months to approximately 10 months by tightening the time allowed for each part of the process and by providing firmer time management. In March, the Commission published for comment proposed rule changes which would help to accomplish this. In addition, it intends to issue a policy statement providing guidance to the Licensing Boards on conducting proceedings so as to expedite the process.

For plants due to be completed in 1983 and beyond, the major action which would eliminate potential delay is early completion of staff reviews. Staff proposals to expedite staff reviews include resumed hiring, mandatory overtime, reallocation of existing resources and transfer of some scheduled projects from the licensing office, Nuclear Reactor Regulation, to other NRC offices. These changes will also help to reduce licensing delays in 1981 and 1982, although the exact time savings depend upon how quickly hiring, internal personnel transfers and shifts in ongoing projects can be accomplished.

On March 18, 1981, the Commission submitted proposed legislation to Congress, which would allow it to authorize interim reactor operation for fuel loading and lowpower operating and testing before the completion of a hearing. Such interim operation would save at least two months and, where the low power testing revealed a need for repairs or modifications, could save substantially more time. This proposed authority would expire at the end of 1983 thereby assuring that this adjustment to our licensing requirements would be temporary and confined to those plants which have been most directly affected by the Commission's postTMI action.

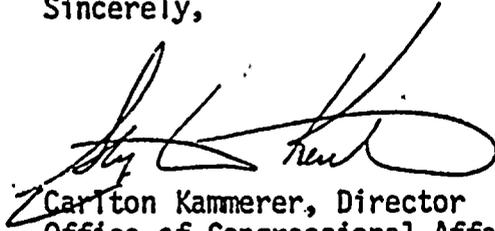
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With respect to the Susquehanna plant, the NRC staff currently project hearings to start in October 1981 with a decision on the full power license expected in June 1982. A twelve-month delay is now estimated using the applicant's construction completion date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlton Kammerer', written over a horizontal line.

Carlton Kammerer, Director  
Office of Congressional Affairs